

status

N E W S L E T T E R

1989 VOLUME 8 ISSUE 3



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PRIVACY ACT

Speculation On Electronic Privacy

Richard Stone, *STATUS*

Electronic Privacy has become a hot topic of conversation lately. Introduction of the Electronic Communications Privacy Act, or Fed. Electronic Communications Act as it is sometimes known has raised some serious legal issues about the responsibilities and duties of anyone who has access to electronic information which is considered to be private. In this article I'll present some of my views on the question of privacy and some suggestions which have proved helpful in handling privacy matters in the past.

For starters, a piece of private information may be generally defined as electronic information which was transmitted to a public host system, but which is not intended by its originator to be accessed by another other than a specific user or users. This covers most electronic mail messages, anonymous postings and even on some systems, program files. Under the act, this information, which was transmitted to the host system by the originator with the understanding that it would be viewed only by those persons to whom it was addressed, may not be made available to other users 'without the originators and/or recipient's consent.'

This means not taking those snide anonymous messages and revealing to all who posted them, no rerouting of mail without asking the person who sent it or the addressee, no placing files which were intended for your eyes only on public display. It even technically could mean that you have no right to read these messages on your own system, as a sysop. Sounds pretty grim, huh? But it's not really that bad, and there are things you can do to

completely circumvent legal obligations to you by legally obligating your users to uphold privacy guidelines on the system.

Informing and obligating system users:

The easiest way to avoid hassle with the privacy act is to implement and enforce some privacy rules on your BBS system. To do this, simply create a news file or logon screen which outlines how the privacy system will work. Some examples would be to state that the SysOp can and does access all information on the system, and is free to do anything with that information. By stating up front that there is no privacy on the system, you have circumvented the letter of the law on the privacy act. This is by far the simplest way to do 'something' about privacy, but I've found an even better way is to create guidelines whereby you state that messages will be held private if they are designated as such by the originator, subject to periodic and private review by the SysOp. Such information will be removed from the system if inappropriate, illegal or injurious in some manner, but it will be done without making the information available to the public. You can further extend this ability by stating that the SysOp may designate someone else to do this task under the same guidelines, but still privately, so that any co-SysOps or SIGops will have the legal right to clean house in the areas they are responsible for. End it all off with a simple statement that tells any users that by using the system, they agree to abide by the rules, and realized all information on the system will be treated in the manner outlined above. If your system will allow you to record a response from each user on this message, then by all means also use a prompt which has the user indicate a willingness to comply with policy. This 'active' agreement provides you with more protection

than a 'passive' agreement would, since if it went to court, it might not be sufficient defense to plead ignorance of wrongdoing. If you can show that you've taken steps to implement and enforce privacy guidelines it cannot hurt your position.

Notes On How To Insure Privacy:

If you as a user feel you must insure the privacy of some information, or as a SysOp wish to implement a means whereby no unauthorized person can access private information, there are means at your disposal to enforce this. Many PD programs are available which utilize an encryption scheme, either automatically or as an option (notably, the MicroEmacs text editor and most any archive utility). As a user, you may encrypt your mail using one of these programs and a password only the recipient knows, possibly arranged by mail. As a sysop, you could encrypt messages on your subboards and in the mail area if you have access to your system's source code and it will support such a process. The exchange of encrypted data over your system might make a sysop uneasy, since they then have no control over what is possibly being done on your system (ie, exchanging of 'pirate' techniques or whatever). If that is the case, then it's your right to forbid such transfers and erase any files of that type you feel unsure about. All of these methods unfortunately add considerable complexity to BBS operation, and you'll have to decide what's right for your use.

SUMMARY

As a SysOp, you are responsible for what goes on on your system. You have a responsibility to see that what goes on within your BBS is not something which could make you legally liable under either the privacy act or copyright law. You have full access to any and all

information on your system (barring an encryption scheme as outlined above), and your best bet is to implement a series of guidelines whereby you provide yourself and/or your co-sysops with the legal and announced right to monitor information discretely and act to correct legally dangerous behavior on the part of any system user. You may choose to forbid private correspondence from your system entirely, but that can lead to problems and may make your BBS less than it could be. The real factor in running a BBS is common sense and some courtesy. You should sit in fear at your console because Joe User is telling Tom User how to break software, thinking all you can do is monitor his exchange, and/or report him to the Feds. If you have a reasonable set of guidelines posted for all to see, you can remove that information, and either chide Joe or terminate him and warn other sysops and users. The privacy act was implemented to prevent sysops from being jerks, so the safe way to go is not to be a jerk. Run your system with courtesy and some pride and your users will probably feel the same way. Run it like a jerk and you can't help but attract the same. I've included a sample privacy notice at the end of this text. It is currently in use on several boards which I have helped to set up and administer. Any questions, suggestions or opinions, please address to me:

Richard Stone STATUS BBS
804-495-3905 UID# 124
CompuServe 72427,553
GEnie R.STONE6

SAMPLE PRIVACY NOTICE:

Privacy Notice Concerning Mail and Posts on This System !

In order to comply with the Federal Electronic Communications Act, the SysOp of this board posts this notice to all new and present users: Since all messages on this

board are of course available to the SysOp and others whom he may designate, this notice is served that private messages (ie, those not specifically designated by the originator or recipient as being for public viewing) can and may be periodically reviewed by the sysop and/or his designates to insure that illegal conduct is not being carried out on his system, and that users are not abusing other users and taking advantage of private messages to do this. Private messages will not be made public or otherwise available to those not designated by the originator or original recipients without prior consent of the originator, excepting that these messages can and may be made available privately to the sysop or his designates solely at the discretion of the SysOp.

This protection extends to the posting of 'anonymous' messages. The sub-op of a message area and the SysOp or co-sysops have access to the name of an anonymous poster, but this shall not be made public without the consent of the originator, nor will any information about an anonymous poster be passed on to another user, excepting those designated by the sysop, at the SysOp's sole discretion.

In order for us all to enjoy the system, there will be as little intrusion as possible, but the SysOp or his designates may move or kill messages or posts which are found to be objectionable or excessively disruptive without consent of the originator, but if such messages or posts are private, they will be handled as described in the above two paragraphs.

By logging onto and using this Bulletin Board Service, you are confirming that you have read and agree with the above policy.

THANKS and ENJOY the system!!

ATTENTION PROGRAMMERS !

Little Things Mean A Lot, especially when left out of arcade games!

Joe R. Hootman, *STATUS* with help from Christy and Michael Hootman: ages 12 and 11.

It probably isn't proper to be critical in your first article for newsletter publication, so I would like to give praise before criticism.

I am grateful to all the great game programmers out there, whether they are commerical, shareware or public domain people, that take the time to write excellent game programs. But...(and here comes the criticism), why did some of you leave out the little things that could make an excellent program an outstanding program?

Suggestions:

1. Pause game option. (Very critical).
Reason: A person may need to see a man about buying a horse, or pay a newspaper person collecting money for paper delivery, or answer the telephone.
2. Saving Hi-scores.
Reason: To show proof of scores, to prevent children from keeping the computer on for hours, waiting to show their high scores to Dad, to eliminate having many pieces of paper laying around with scores from different games, and to have pride in your name being among the top scorers.
3. Level Selection
Reason: To provide players with different skills a reasonable beginning level. Example: Some children start playing games when they are very young and the beginning level is too difficult, causing loss of interest in a good game, also, for some of us that are

not so young, like me. When playing **OUTRUN & CRAZY CARS**, - I am 49 years old and have been driving a car for 33 years, I can't drive a car through the first level on either one of these games. For some people, the beginning level is not much of a challenge. The capability to move to a higher level should be provided.

4. Save game option.

Reason: Sometimes people may be playing a game in which they have never gotten as far, or a score as high, and they must do something else that will take them away from the game for a long time. A save option is needed.

5. Being able to quit without re-booting (shareware and PD)

Reason: To provide users having more than one game on a disk the capability to quit one game, then go back to the desktop to select another game or insert a new disk.

6. Being able to start over, during play.

Reason: Some times you know you are defeated and want to start over, rather than continue playing until the game ends, or reboot.

7. Joystick, keyboard, mouse, etc. selection for playing.

Reason: To provide a person the option best suited for them, and also, some people prefer keyboard keys rather than joystick or mouse for different games. Example: **SUMMER CHALLENGE** Skeet Shoot gives the option to use Joystick or Mouse. When using the Joystick, it is almost impossible to hit anything, however, with the mouse it is at least, possible to hit some of the skeet.

8. Multiple player option for some games.

Reason: If more than one player is competing, each player must wait until the other player has completed the game instead of taking turns after their man dies or car crashes etc.

9. What ever it takes to provide more accurate response to Joystick and Mouse movement.

Reason: Some games make it impossible to control an object with any kind of accuracy and therefore become frustrating to play.

10. Actual player name option, instead of Player 1, Player 2 etc.

Reason: Young children forget which player they are, but they will remember their name.

Thanks to Christy and Michael for helping me write this article, and to John Bailly for helping with the editing. I know we forgot some of the things that upset us while playing arcade type games, but we will be reminded of them again sometime while we are playing them, and, how much we miss those "little things that mean alot".

Well, this may need a little help from the editor, but, I finally wrote MY first article for the newsletter, and it wasn't that difficult, in fact, I enjoyed doing it! Now, its your turn, c'mon everybody, give it a try.

(ed's note: thanks Joe, can we look forward to articles on a regular basis now?... best new releases, top ten lists or the like?)

UP PERISCOPE

Bob Womack, *STATUS*

GATO, A game cartridge by Atari
Gato is a trademark of Spectrum Holobyte
Atari XE version by Xanth F/X

When I saw this one I thought, "Alright! A new game for the Atari eight-bit!". I put it on my list for Santa and he brought it. Having seen it and read its package in the stores I thought "anything by Xanth Parks' Amigaball, FujiBoink.

Swandemo has to be great, right?"

This really is a cute 'game'. It suffers a bit when given the title "simulation", though. Actually, it suffers the most by comparison to its predecessor, "Silent Service", by MicroProse. While considered a bench-mark in the field of combat simulations, Silent Service is considered by many to be "long" on technical detail and "short" on play-ability. It's something like Flight Simulator II: you need a technical manual and a strong background in the subject matter of the simulator to enjoy it (no problem to me as a submarine buff). Coupled with this depth of realism, Silent Service sports a MicroProse trademark. Rather than limit the scope of a game, they would rather construct it in modules and load it in from disk as needed, which causes some longish waits as lots of code loads in. But, despite the drawbacks, Silent Service is an excellent and very accurate simulation of World War II submarine warfare in the Pacific which rewards a gamer for learning something of the subject it is based upon.

I was looking forward to some light relief from the few drawbacks of Silent Service and further development of the graphics involved when I told Mrs. Claus she could really score high points by getting this one. I was right to expect the better graphics but I erred in believing there would be any more challenge or realism to this game.

First off, the game wants a COLOR monitor or TV. Period. Without one, when you look at the charts to get an idea of where you are, you can't tell yourself from the bad guys. The description on the box doesn't mention that. There are some problems with authenticity: To line-up a ship in your periscope's crosshairs, you must steer the

whole ship! Rather than allowing you to walk the periscope around in order to get an idea of what surrounds you, the designer gave you four directional views from the periscope (fore, aft, port, and starboard), each with a reticle by which to aim and judge distance. However, if that wasn't enough, only the forward view and reticle can be used to aim the torpedoes. That means your bow must be pointed directly at the target! By the way, the directions don't tell you that, so you can spend lots of time centered on the port and starboard periscope reticles, firing torpedoes (which have no wake and can't be traced) off into the blue... There is little hope of a quick set-up and shoot using this method. Also, "Night" mode means you see NOTHING out the periscope, even at close range. Only your radar is effective at night and its CRT is an ungraduated circle with no range rings or fore-aft axis line. Fire away, Gridley...

Fleet submarines had four or six torpedo tubes forward and two to four aft, handy if you plan to sneak right into an enemy formation and fire a forward salvo at a juicy main target while lining up for an aft defensive salvo on the escort behind you. Gato's sub has only four tubes forward. In order to accomplish the same combined attack in this simulation, you must maneuver your sub into the first firing position, take the first shot, quickly maneuver your boat to bring the second target to a relative bearing of 0°, hope the tubes are reloaded (the reload process has been speeded up to make up for the lack of tubes), and hope the first salvo hasn't hit your first target, warning the enemy of your presence and thereby removing one of your best defensive weapons, 'surprise'.

Okay, enough GATO-bashing. The views from Gato's periscope ARE much better than those of Silent Service! My five year-old took one look at the screen as I was

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Gregory T. Avant
LaVerne W. Avant

that ship going away from you?". If a five year-old can pick-up that much info from a casual glance at the screen, Xanth must have done something right. You don't have to wait for anything but a printout of your orders before each mission. There are more missions available than just searching out and sinking ships. A full mission can usually be executed in less than an hour. The radar screen looks and behaves very much like a real radar scope, other than the fact that it is entirely uncalibrated.

So how does it stack up? I'm glad Mrs. Claus got it for me. Glad she got it, so I have more than one submarine simulator. Glad she got it because the graphics of a torpedo hit are lots of fun after an excruciating approach and line-up. And I'm glad SHE got it so I wasn't disappointed to have plunked out that much money for a program that gave-up nearly as much realism as it gained when compared to the previous attempts in the same vein.

<<<< + >>>>

STs SHUT OUT

Button and Badge Maker Review Buck Maddrey, *STATUS*

It was half time when we left, as you remember, with the scoreboord reading Intracorp 1, Atari ST 0 and I was awaiting the arrival of a replacement disk for Button and Badge Maker (BBM).

As the second half begins, I'm still waiting! After about four weeks, I decided they at least deserved a call before I counted them out. They tell me they never received my disk, warranty registration, or my letter requesting a replacement disk. They offer to process my request immediately and send me a new disk and another registration card. I received the replacements about 5 days

later.....Now, 'Let the game begin', and on with the review.....

BBM is a GEM program furnished on an unprotected disk and therefore may be installed on your hard drive with ease. Packaged with the program disk is an instruction booklet, with specific Amiga and ST sections. There are also five sheets of pin feed badge stock, five pages of pin feed, peelable, button stickers, two clear plastic pocket badges, one clip-on badge, and three circular pin-on buttons.

The instruction booklet says that this is "an entertainment package" allowing the user to design and print his own buttons and badges. "The buttons and badges you create are intended for recreational and educational use" and are "limited to the capabilities of your own personal printer". Well, these statements tell it all. They say the limiting factor here is the printer, not the computer, so lets see.

Before getting into a heavy design of my own, I decided to check out the badge samples that had been stored on the disk. Selecting 'Open' from the menu brought up a item selector box from which I could make my choice. There was only ONE. I double clicked on it, the drive spun, and the badge appeared on my screen. To my surprise, this image was glitched. There were several curved lines, and letters which looked like they were superimposed on top of each other. Hey! What gives here? This was the very reason I had returned the first disk for replacement, now heres another one just like it! I decided to print it out anyway. Maybe the printout would reveal the problem.....noooooooo, the print looked the same as the screen, no clues here. Hmmm

Back to the menu bar, I chose 'New' to start my own badge, which

erased the garbage off the screen and gave me a clean work area. Next, I loaded an image from the disk for inclusion on my badge. There are very few choices and every one of them was double and triple imposed. At this point, I removed the disk from the drive, placed it in the box, shut down, and walked away.

Intracorp received a call from me before their coffee had finished brewing the next morning. Aren't 800 numbers nice? A hard to find technician was quick to admit that he didn't know what could be wrong, and assured me it was not incompatibility problems with the Mega, although BBM had not been tested on one. He offered to "see what I can find out" and for me to give him a call back.

BBM work screen is divided into three parts. The top menu bar, the center work area, and a bottom menu. The bottom menu contains several boxes from which to choose functions. The Draw box (freehand) also has other choices: lines, circles, air brush, horizontal and vertical mirrors, and a fill function. There is a colors box (black & white), and a fill pattern box. The text rotation box allows one to turn text on either side or upside down and the text sample box shows your current text size out of 12 choices and the current attributes chosen. You may choose outline, bold, solid, light and skewed by sight sample only.

The center work area displays an outline of your project badge or button once you choose which you are making. Your task, if you decide to accept it, is to fill the blank space with something intelligible. "Hello, I'm Ferd Berfel" or "I'm Fanny Farkel, it's MY party. The real trick here is to get all this text centered and with borders that are equal, without the help of any grids or centering commands. Choose 'Enter text' under the top menu 'Names' and start typing.

Then, just move the mouse up and click it down in place. Misplaced text cannot be moved, you may however, 'Undo' it, start all over or you may 'Cut' unwanted areas and reinstall it. Sections of these projects may also be 'Grabbed' and saved to disk for future use. Once a project is satisfactorily completed, it can be saved for future retrieval.

There are several other choices under the 'Names' menu. These allow the user to create and manipulate lists of names for printing. Entered names on the list will be placed on a separate button or badge in a mailmerge fashion. This could be very handy for parties, conventions, etc.

In closing, I feel that the conception here is a good one but the implementation is very poor. The 'Draw' mode is inadequate and certainly could use a magnify function. A complete library of detailed icons is needed, or if nothing else, a compatibility with Printmaster would be welcomed. TEXT, the very area in which this program should shine, has nearly been overlooked. Some real nice Olde English, Broadway, or Bookman fonts certainly would dress up a badge or button. Another helpful addition would be a text alignment grid or centering command.

Intracorp, I don't think you have come anywhere near exploring the 'limits of my personal 360dpi printer' or even scratched the surface of the ST Computer. You should have released this program as ST Shareware, refined it, and then and only then, released a product worthy of the \$50 price you ask.

PS, the answer at last. I have finally discovered the solution to the mystery of the superimposed images. They are color images! Who would have thought that a graphics intensive program would use color

as the default? Not me, and it appears that the technician didn't think of it either.

No where in the manual does it state that to use the stored images you must use a color monitor. There was only one PRG file on the disk, how was I to know?

In fairness, the manual does state that once I select 'Print', I will be asked if I have a color printer, and upon giving my answer the buttons or badges will begin printing. Also, if I'm using a 'Names' list, they will be printed in the color and size selected. Does this imply that I should be using the program in color? The monochrome version does not ask about the color printer and even if it did, isn't black always black?

There is some mention of color in the section for the Amiga, but why would an ST user read that?.....

I wonder about their program Bumper Sticker Maker.....naaaa, I'll let somebody else try that one.

As for the final score, I'll let you figure that out for yourself.

<<<<<+>>>>>

SPARTA BATCH HELP

Whole Disk Copy With BATCh Files
Ron Johnson, *STATUS*

The use of BATCh files in SpartaDOS is a no frills very quick way to make multiple copies of whole disk sides without using fancy menu driven copy programs. For those of us with extended memory XE machines running SpartaDOS and US Doubler 1050 disk drives, double density full disk sides may be reproduced in about one and one-half minutes. Single density full disk sides may be

reproduced in about one minute. This includes removing the newly copied disk and inserting a new unformatted disk. XE's with no extended RAM will take longer, of course.

The first BATCh file, COPEE.BAT, sets up the ramdisk as D3:; turns on the type ahead buffer (KEY ON); installs the TDLIN (R-TIME 8 cartridge); and also allows TIME and DATE to be set by the user if no R-TIME 8 cartridge is present (hit return twice if the cart is plugged in). It then copies the two BATCh files to RAM; transfers control to D3: asks to have the disk to be copied inserted in Drive 1; loads the side into D3: as SIDEA.; and, finally, calls for the second BATCh file, COPEE2.BAT, to be run.

The second BATCh file, COPEE2.BAT, is recursive. This means that it calls itself so that the copy function is repeated until you <RESET> out. A message is displayed requesting that the destination disk be placed in Drive 1. The file SIDEA. is then copied from D3: to D1:. This is repeated with recursive calls to itself with the command: '-COPEE2'.

The whole process may be repeated for SIDEB of the disk. One may also preload both sides of the disk to be copied into the ramdisk. Then write another BATCh file that would recursively copy SIDEB.

Remember to have X32D.DOS, RD.COM, TDLIN.COM, SCOPY.COM, and a STARTUP.BAT that calls COPEE.BAT on the disk along with the two copy BATCh files!

The three files, COPEE.BAT, COPEE2.BAT, and this (README.TXT), have been put on the STATUS BBS in the SpartaDOS SIG. The two BATCh files, may be typed in from the listings below, if

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file. End with a '<CNTRL-3>'. Do the same for the second file, using 'COPY E: D1:COPEE2.BAT <CR>'. The '/U' means the disk is US sector skew and the '/R' means the disk is really a ramdisk.

COPEE.BAT

TDLINE

KEY ON

TIME

DATE

RD D3:

COPY SCOPY.COM D3:

COPY COPEE.BAT D3:

COPY COPEE2.BAT D3:

D3:

;Insert Disk to be Copied
in Drive 1

PAUSE

SCOPY D1: /U D3:SIDEA. /R
-COPEE2

COPEE2.BAT

;Insert Destination Disk
in Drive 1

PAUSE

SCOPY D3:SIDEA. D1: /U
-COPEE2

<<<<<+>>>>>

WELCOME

Since December 1988, STATUS has had 13 *NEW* members and 13 others who have renewed their membership. Glad to have you all with us.

DICK LITCHFIELD

EDWARD POE

MERLE WATTS

ROBERT & RUTH WOMACK

DAN BADER

GARY & DONNA BLUEMINK

RAFAEL CORONADO

BOB GARTMAN

RON & RONALD JOHNSON

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<<<<<+>>>>>

FAST LANE

STATUS is proud to announce that it's RBBS is now running on a Supra 2400. The SX 212 went into quiet retirement on Sunday April 16. It will be used during our club meetings for telecommunications demos.

STATUS RBBS has logged over 49,000 calls to date. It will continue to offer the best of the newest PD software for all ATARI computers and active message bases for all users.

The upgrade to 2400 baud was made possible by donations by our members and funds generated by our raffles.

STATUS RBBS had previously upgraded its software to BBS Express Professional by Keuth Ledbetter of Richmond Virginia. Now, with the addition of 2400 baud, we feel that we have a true Hi-Class, Fast Lane operation.

Give STATUS RBBS a call sometime, check it out, and see for yourself !

Telephone 804-495-3905

SysOp Bob Womack
ST SysOp Dick Litchfield

<<<<<+>>>>>

Next time we'll have a review of Mega Touch from Regent Software and a list of SpartaDoe PD utilities. Until then.....(ed)

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Meetings: STATUS meetings are held on the first and third Thursdays of the month at the 7-UP Bottling Company, 5700 Ward Avenue, in Virginia Beach at 7:30 p.m. All interested parties are welcome to attend.

Newsletter Articles:

Submitted articles are preferred as disk text files, but will be gratefully accepted as hard copy (including handwriting) if you do not have a disk drive. If you have a modem, you can upload your articles to the Editor by calling the STATUS BBS at 495-3905. Articles may be submitted at any time, but will probably not make that month's Newsletter if submitted less than one week prior to the first meeting of the month.

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